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TAGS: PHUM PREL SU VT

SUBJECT: POPE'S CALLS FOR JUST WORLD ORDER, ATTENTION TO TERRORISM,
DARFUR

¶1. (U) Pope Benedict XVI used his first Christmas message to the city of Rome and the world (*Urbi et Orbi*) to focus attention on the threat of terrorism and the humanitarian crises around the world. (Complete text of the speech was emailed to EUR/WE.) With an audience of hundreds of millions via television and radio, the pope also drew attention to poverty, weapons proliferation, pandemics and the environment.

¶2. (U) Benedict XVI called for a united humanity to confront the "menace of terrorism." The pontiff devoted the greater part of his international review to Africa, invoking God's blessing on all who "work for peace, integral development and the prevention of fratricidal conflicts." He encouraged efforts to protect basic human rights in Darfur and other regions of central Africa. Pope Benedict called for the resolution of tensions in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Territories, Israel and Lebanon, as well as on the Korean Peninsula.

¶3. (SBU) Comment. Vatican FM officials have been pressing to keep Darfur on the papal agenda and will be encouraged that Benedict XVI used his first *Urbi et Orbi* message to draw attention once again to the situation there. Representatives from the Sant'Egidio Community (involved in Darfur negotiations in Rome and Africa) told us December 25 that they too were heartened by the pope's mention of Darfur. End comment.

ROONEY